decisions taken in these meetings, both sides have agreed to jointly co-ordinate measures to counter ISI activities directed against India. On their part, the Government of Nepal have assured that their territory would not be used for activities inimical to India's interest and have been extending their co-operation to the Government of India in this regard.

Indo-US Cooperation

4459. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India and USA have recently signed an agreement for mutual cooperation;

(b) if so, the details of the issues discussed with the US counterpart and the US President; and

(c) to what extent his trip to USA was successful?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) No, Madam.

(b) and (c) During the recent visit of External Affairs Minister and Raksha Mantri to the United States from April 5-7, 2001, he held fruitful discussions with the new U.S. Administration including the Secretary of State, the Defence Secretary and the National Security Adviser. He also had the opportunity of meeting the U.S. President. During the discussions, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintain the momentum in Indo-U.S. relations and to impart to it greater depth and content. The visit of the Minister was also successful in confirming the broad-based nature of Indo-U.S. relations as also the Dialogue Architecture that had been put in place in the year 2000.

Demolition of statues Buddha

4460. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Taliban Militia in Afghanistan has fully

demolished historic Buddha statues disregarding appeals from world leaders;

(b) what steps government have taken at diplomatic channels to prevent these demolition and the reasons for their ineffectiveness;

(c) whether Government apprehends similar treatment to Hindu temples and Sikh Gurudwaras in Afghanistan; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken or proposed to be taken for protection of these religious places?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) and (b) Following the issue of a decree on 26th February, 2001 ordering the destruction of all statues in Afghanistan, appeals were addressed internationally to the Taliban not to destroy historical works of art, being the heritage of all mankind. The Buddha statues at Bamiyan were specifically mentioned. The Taliban Militia completely disregarded international opinion and appeals and carried out this act of cultural vandalism over a period of time.

In a statement issued on 27th February, 2001, the Government condemned the Taliban decree and called upon them to ensure full protection of Bamiyan Buddhas and all other relics. On 2nd March, 2001, the External Affairs Minister made a statement in both Houses of Parliament in which he, *inter-alia*, offered to bring these artifacts to India for safekeeping for the Afghan people. On the same day both Houses of Parliament adopted unanimous resolutions condemning this barbarism.

The Government also raised this issue internationally. Prime Minister wrote to several Heads of Governments, including the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General and to Heads of Governments of countries with Buddhist populations (Bhutan, Japan, Sri Lanka, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Republic of Korea) urging that the collective voice of humanity be raised against this outrage and that the Taliban be made to see reason. India co-sponsored a UNGA resolution adopted on 9th March, 2001 on the

destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas and other mainifestations of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic art. The Resolution called upon the Taliban to abide by their previous commitments to protect Afghanistan's cultural heritage from all acts of vandalism damage and theft.

There was widespread international condemnation of the Taliban militia's actions. The UN Secretary General, Director General of UNESCO, European Union and several Muslim countries were severely critical of the Taliban Militia. During Prime Minister's recent visit to Iran, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran while condemning the Taliban actions said that they had brought a bad name to Islam.

(c) and (d) The Government is aware of harsh discriminatory policies of the Taliban against the minorities and their places of worship in Afghanistan. Government has brought this to the attention of its foreign interlocutors.

Outcome of Prime Minister's Iran visit

4461. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:
PROF. M. SANKARLINGAM:
SHRI ABANI ROY:
SHRI B. J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Prime Minister has recently visited Iran for holding talks as "Strategic partners" to deal with the conflict with Afghanistan, establishing better relations with Iran and work for stability in the Central Asia;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions and outcome thereof including Pakistan's interference in our internal affairs and encouraging terrorist activities alongwith the number and details of agreements signed pertaining to trade, customs, energy cooperation, bilateral investment protection, information technology, the options to transport gas to India etc. including strategy between the two countries on Taliban; and

(c) the details thereof?